Teaching Civic Engagement Through Immersive Experience:
Students' Acquisition of Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

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ABSTRACT

Civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions form the cornerstones of democracy. Each of these competencies is necessary for responsible, productive, and engaged citizenship. Students who receive high quality civic education that takes an integrative approach to imparting these competencies are the most likely to become participatory adults. However, students from less privileged circumstances often attend poorly resourced schools and receive limited or substandard civics training that is especially devoid of attention to skills and dispositions. They also lack access to curricular interventions that take an active learning approach that is relevant to their needs and personal experience. We examine the effectiveness of two programs of the Center for Civic Education—the Congressional Academy for American History and Civics and Project Citizen. The programs take different approaches to active learning that facilitates students' development of civic skills and dispositions. We find that both programs impart civic orientations to high-need students more effectively than traditional civics classes. Differences in civic learning based on SES, race, and gender were evident which points to the importance of designing civics curricula that meet the needs of diverse student populations.

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Preparing middle and high school students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for active engagement in civic life is a primary objective of civic education in the United States (National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998; Educating for American Democracy Initiative, 2021). Knowledge of government and political processes provides a foundation upon which other civic orientations can build (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996; Schulz, et al., 2016). At the same time, the development of civic skills and dispositions can contribute to civic knowledge gain (Stern, et al., 2021). While students' civic knowledge remains subpar (NAEP, 2018), recent evidence suggests that civics courses are contributing to an increase in Americans' awareness of facts about government and politics (Annenberg Public Policy Center, 2019). Many civics and social studies courses and programs are designed for the purpose of conveying factual knowledge. Having students acquire the skills and dispositions conducive to active citizenship remains a more elusive instructional goal (Jamieson, 2013).

Civic skills are competencies that are required to participate responsibly and respectfully in political life (Kirlin, 2003). They encompass behaviors beneficial to the development of personal agency that promotes civic engagement (Winthrop, 2020). Civic dispositions are orientations and ideals that underpin individuals' commitment to democracy. They include respect for the rule of law, concern for constitutional rights, appreciation of the freedoms of others, and support for actions that promote the public good. Civic skills were listed as civic education requirements in 41 states, and civic dispositions were requirements in all 50 states in 2012 (Godsay, et al., 2012). However, a 2021 study rated 20 states as having 'inadequate' civic standards based, in large part, on their failure to incorporate civic skills and dispositions effectively into the curriculum (Stern, et al., 2021).

Students who receive high quality civic education that takes an integrative approach to imparting civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions are the most likely to understand political issues, take part in political discussions, engage in their communities to help solve problems, and participate in civic activities (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011). However, there is evidence of widening civic inequality, as students from less privileged circumstances attend poorly resourced schools and receive limited or substandard civics training that often is devoid of attention to skills and dispositions. Wealthy, White, and academically successful students routinely have more and better opportunities for good civic education than less advantaged students (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008; Kuang, Zhu, and Kennedy, 2020). Schools serving privileged student populations are more likely to offer interactive civic education that is conducive to imparting civic skills and disposition (Levine, 2009). These educational disparities contribute to a civic opportunity gap that disproportionately suppresses the civic agency of poor, non-White citizens while augmenting the influence of wealthy, White, native-born individuals (Levinson, 2010). Studies have shown that students from poor economic backgrounds, including students from impoverished rural and urban areas, and students of color who receive high quality civic education have the same or greater civic gains than their more advantaged counterparts (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008; Owen, Hartzell, and Sanchez, 2020; Winthrop, 2020; Hoskins, Huang, and Arensmeier, 2021; Weinberg, 2022). Further, civic education programs that allow

students to engage with content in a way that is relevant and reflects their personal circumstances tend to produce greater civic gains among these students (Clay and Rubin, 2020).

Apart from issues of access, designing and implementing curriculum interventions and extracurricular programs that successfully impart civic skills and dispositions to disadvantaged student populations is challenging. The interventions must incorporate mechanisms of civic empowerment that are relevant to these groups along with more traditional forms of engagement (Levinson, 2012). This study examines two programs of the Center for Civic Education (Center) designed to enhance students' civic competencies: 1) the Congressional Academy for American History and Civics (CA) and 2) Project Citizen (PC). The CA, along with the Presidential Academy for American History and Civics for teachers, provides an immersive educational experience in civics, American government, and political history for secondary school students and their teachers. PC is a widely used intensive curriculum intervention that actively engages young people in cooperative, project-based learning as they work together to identify and propose solutions to a problem in their school or community. In this study, we address the core question: To what extent did students participating in the CA or PC gain knowledge, dispositions, and skills conductive to civic engagement? Specifically, we explore the extent to which high-need students, including students who attend Title I schools and students of color, gained civic competencies after participating in the program. The Civic Education Research Lab (Civic Education Research Lab | Georgetown University) at Georgetown University conducted studies of the CA and PC and collected the data presented here.

We find that both the CA and the PC interventions were effective in conveying civic knowledge, skills, and to a somewhat lesser extent, dispositions to middle and high school students. The results for CA indicate significant differences in civic learning for students attending Title I schools compared to those in schools serving higher SES populations. We discovered significant differences in the civic orientations students developed from PC based on the race and gender.

Toward Quality Civic Education

For more than a quarter-century, concerns about the civic health of the nation, sparked by low levels of engagement by young citizens, have prompted calls for improvements in civic education. Demands for increasing access to quality civic education have become louder in the aftermath of the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. The development of curriculum interventions and programs has benefitted from a spate of reports and research detailing what works and best practices (e.g., The Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2012; California Task For on K-12 Civic Learning, 2014; Schulz, et al., 2016; Shapiro and Brown, 2018; Educating for American Democracy, 2022). Significant innovations in civics instruction at the elementary and secondary education levels have provided opportunities for students to acquire competencies that carry over to adulthood. Still, civic education remains marginalized in middle and high school curricula, especially for high-need or disadvantaged students who stand to benefit from it the most (Healy, 2022). Curriculum interventions employing active learning strategies that exploit the synergies between acquiring civic knowledge, skills, and disposition are most often available to students in schools serving students from more privileged backgrounds.

Civic Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

Civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions form the cornerstones of democracy. They do not exist independent of one another. Each of these competencies is necessary for responsible, productive, and engaged citizenship. Whether by default or design, however, civic knowledge often is given greater emphasis in civic education than skills and dispositions (Shapiro and Brown, 2018). Time and resource restrictions can impede the implementation of innovative civics initiatives in schools either during or outside of class. Textbook knowledge is more readily conveyed through traditional instructional pedagogies, such as lecture-based approaches, than skills and dispositions. The emphasis on assessments using standardized tests of factual knowledge reinforces this tendency. Teachers must have sufficient skills to incorporate innovative pedagogies that involve active learning and foster an open classroom climate. These skills have become even more essential for civics instruction in the current contentious political environment. In addition, educators must keep pace as ever-evolving technological affordances prompt changes in the learning environment. Access to professional development opportunities is not always available, especially for teachers of high-need and at-risk students working in challenging school settings.

It is undeniable that civic knowledge is important for engaged citizenship. It encompasses a vast amount of information pertinent to the foundations and institutions of government, political processes, public policies, and laws. Knowledgeable citizens understand their role in a democratic polity, know their rights and responsibilities in society, and are aware of America's place in the world (Branson and Quigley, 1998; Van Camp and Baugh, 2016). The argument that knowledge forms the foundation for citizens' engagement in political life (Niemi and Junn, 1998; Neimi, 2001; Galston, 2004; Milner, 2010; Campbell, 2006; Kleinberg and Lau, 2019) has been used to justify its prominence in civics instruction. Scholars have noted correlation between political knowledge and engagement that is predicated upon the notion that knowledge is a building block, if not a necessary precondition, for action (Galston, 2004; DelliCarpini and Keeter, 1996). The connection between civic knowledge and dispositions also has been established. People possessing greater civic knowledge tend to be supportive of democratic values, such as liberty, equality, and political tolerance. They also are more politically efficacious. They have the confidence and ability to stake a position in the marketplace of political ideas as well as to actively engage in governmental and civic affairs (Finkel and Ernst, 2005; Galston, 2004; Brody, 1994; Youniss, 2011). However, if civic knowledge is to be sustained beyond rote memorization for a class test it needs to be reinforced through experience and the embrace of enduring civic convictions.

Civic skills are comprised of a range of proficiencies required for democratic engagement. Although there are wide-ranging perspectives about what constitutes civic skills, most conceptualizations consider skills that involve communication, collaboration, critique, and decision-making (Ata, 2019). The development of civic skills is essential for critical thinking that facilitates collective action (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011). Patrick (2002) proposed that civic skills are comprised of cognitive skills and participatory skills. Cognitive skills involve describing, synthesizing, and evaluating information pertinent to civic life. They include the ability to monitor the media, gather information, and critically evaluate issues and policies. Participator skills are associated with following public events and issues as well as taking action

to improve situations in the community. They consist of voting, listening to and processing diverse views on issues, speaking openly and expressing opinions, working collaboratively in the community to solve problems, and advocating on behalf of a cause. Other perspectives incorporate the notion of cognitive and participator skills while highlighting the need for critical reasoning skills that facilitate democratic decision-making. They emphasize the need for citizens to develop negotiating and coalition building skills that can enable reaching consensus to affect positive change. Critical reasoning also involves making moral judgements when taking social action. Civic skills are bolstered when students develop research, inquiry, communication, and leadership capabilities (Brammer, et al., 2011)

What constitutes civic dispositions is somewhat difficult to pin down (Fraker, 2018). Dispositions are sometimes conflated with civic actions as opposed to being orientations that can be precursors to direct engagement. Civic dispositions are orientations related to democratic character formation. They are the public and private traits essential to the maintenance and improvement of constitutional democracy (Branson, 1998). The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools (2011) defines civic dispositions as a concern for others' rights and welfare, fairness, reasonable levels of trust, and a sense of public duty. People who evince a strong democratic temperament are willing to compromise personal interests for the greater good (Stambler, 2011). They embrace their democratic rights, responsibilities, and duties in a responsible, tolerant, and civil manner. They have the confidence to engage in civic affairs and to participate actively in political life (Torney-Purta, 2004). Civic dispositions were described as "habits of the heart" by Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 (2003), and are elements of civic culture and civic virtue (Dalton, 2008). The acquisition of civic dispositions is necessary for the stable functioning of a constitutional democracy. Civic dispositions include respect for the rule of law, a commitment to justice, equality, and fairness, trust in government, civic duty, attentiveness to political matters, political efficacy, political tolerance, respect for human rights, concern for the welfare of others, civility, social responsibility, and community connectedness (Morgan and Streb, 2001; Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011). These dispositions enable people to become independent members of society who accept the moral and legal obligations of a democracy, embrace social justice, engage diverse perspectives, and take personal responsibility for their actions (Kahne, et al., 2006). They encourage thoughtful and effective participation in civic affairs. They require citizens to keep informed about politics and government, monitor political leaders and public agencies to ensure their actions are principled, and work through peaceful, legal means to change unjust policies (Branson, 1998).

Disparities in Civic Learning Opportunities

While even modest exposure to civic education can make a difference, well-designed programs have the strongest impact (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Educating for Democracy, 2021). Quality curricular opportunities have been shown to galvanize political interest, civic commitment, and community involvement (Torney-Purta, 2002; Owen 2015; Owen, Hartzell, and Sanchez, 2020). Incorporating skills related to civic engagement in the classroom can improve students' civic knowledge and their commitment to taking part in public affairs (Van Camp and Baugh, 2016). Students can make the connection between getting involved in civic affairs and being a good citizen. Vibrant curriculum interventions that simulate real-world situations, such as participating in election-related activities, can heighten learning of civic skills

(McDevitt and Chaffee, 2000; Meirick and Wackman, 2004; Gould, et al., 2011). Secondary school civics instruction can spark awareness and discussion of political issues and increase students' propensity for political participation. Students can learn to identify problems in their communities and seek solutions by working collectively (Kahne, et al., 2006; Kahne and Sporte, 2008; Galston, 2007; Owen and Irion-Groth, 2020; Owen, 2022). Community benefits have been gained from civic education, as youth-led projects and activities have resulted in policy reforms (Lerner, 2004; Ginwright, 2010; Putnam and Feldstein, 2003).

There is great variation in civics offerings across schools ranging from a short unit as part of an American history class to required year-long courses of study. Some schools offer project-based learning experiences, activities related to political processes and public policy, and courses that meaningfully integrate service learning into the curriculum. Participation in school-sponsored civics clubs and extracurricular activities outside the classroom can enhance students' potential to become engaged citizens. Low income and minority students rarely receive the benefits of the best—or even average—civic education. The disparities in civic education for high-need students have been growing wider. The high-need population includes students who are eligible for free or reduced cost lunches, living in poverty, homeless, in foster care, or incarcerated, disconnected or migrant students, minority students, English language learners, and students with special needs. High-need students often attend Title I schools with large percentages low-income students which receive assistance from the federal government.

The instructional innovations and advocacy for increased civic education in primary and secondary schools have produced some improvements in students' civic competencies. However, the inequities in civic knowledge across racial and class divides has grown (Hansen, et al., 2018; Mahnken, 2018). Poor and minority students are educated under conditions of *de facto* segregation, as they are concentrated in underfunded schools located in central cities and rural areas (Levinson, 2010; United Negro College Fund, 2022). The situation is especially dire for the approximately 60% of young Americans who reside in "civic deserts"—places where opportunities for civic engagement are limited and effective civics and history education is lacking (Atwell, Bridgeland, and Levine, 2017). High-need students are taught by less qualified educators and receive fewer instructional resources than other students, even those in the same district (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately assigned to teachers with the least preparation, the weakest academic records, and the fewest resources at their disposal (Murnane and Steele, 2007), even as research has shown that the influence of teacher quality on student performance is more important than the race or class of students or school characteristics (Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges, 2004; Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain, 2005). Further, civic education often is perceived as non-essential for students who are not college-bound, the preponderance of whom qualify as high-need (Zaff, et al., 2009). The civic education received by poor students and students of color is unequal in terms of the content conveyed and the pedagogies employed. Compared to schools serving students from average SES backgrounds, low SES students are half as likely to study how laws are made, half as likely to have taken part in service activities, and 30% less likely to report that debates or panel discussions were held in their social studies classes (Kahne and Middaugh, 2008; Generation Citizen, 2020). Schools serving high-need students often do not have student governments or other mechanisms for involving students in policy making (McFarland and Starrmans, 2009).

The notion of a racial achievement gap in academic performance oft has been cited. Differences in civic achievement based on students' racial and ethnic backgrounds have been identified. However, the findings are more nuanced than the characterization as a "gap" would imply. White students' scores on standardized civic knowledge tests have been consistently higher than those of Black and Latinx students. The findings for civic skills and dispositions have been mixed. Some evidence indicates that Black and Latinx students are less likely to develop civic engagement orientations than White students—a similar trend to the disparity between students from low and higher SES backgrounds. White students are twice as likely as Black youth and three times as likely as Latinx youth to contact a public official. At the same time, positive trends have been found (Generation Citizen, 2020). Research suggests that Black and Latinx youth have greater exposure to democratic practices and civic self-efficacy than White students. These practices were connected to greater civic knowledge (Littenberg-Tobias and Cohen, 2016). In addition, data from the 2018 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) shows that Black and Latinx high school students were slightly more likely to report that they participated in civic-oriented activities, such as letter writing or taking part in debates, than White students (Hansen, et al., 2020).

Differences in educational achievement based on the combined effects of race and gender have been discovered. Male Black and Latinx students typically have outperformed their female counterparts in STEM content areas (Le Force, et al., 2019). However, Black girls have been making greater gains than other gender/racial groups on achievement test measures. Black female students attain higher history and civics competencies than Black females after taking high school courses (Young, Foster, and Druery, 2018). There is some evidence suggesting that female students gravitate toward aspects of civic education that promote justice-oriented citizenship and social responsibility while male students are more likely to focus on participatory citizenship that emphasizes power, leadership, and social action (O'Brien, 2022). This finding tracks with trends in young Black and Latinx women's engagement in community affairs (Logan and Mackey, 2020)

Educational curriculum interventions that feature active learning and an open classroom environment can overcome some of the limitations that high-need students face in civic education. There is a need to develop curricular programs that acknowledge student differences and make content relevant to learners so that they can understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship on their own terms (Kuang, et al. 2020; Clay and Rubin, 2020). High-need students should learn how civics can be useful to them and gain a realistic perspective on their relationship to government. They should be encouraged to contribute to the selection of issues and topics that they feel are important to research and discuss. They should understand how their engagement in civic life can achieve positive change in their communities, while acknowledging that not all of their efforts will be successful. Civic education should build political agency by connecting students with leaders and organizations who can position them to take action (Kelley, 2019).

This study examines two programs of the Center that provide students with active learning experiences in a supportive atmosphere. The programs involve different curriculum interventions and formats. TheCongressional Academy for American History and Civics provides an immersive, two-week residential experience rooted in the Center's We the People:

The Citizen and the Constitution curriculum. PC is a project-based program that allows students to gain experience with the public policy making process. It is typically implemented in the classroom, but also can be used in an extra-curricular context.

Congressional Academy for History and Civics

The Center's Congressional Academy for American History and Civics was developed to empower secondary school students from diverse backgrounds by strengthening their knowledge, skills, and dispositions to engage in government and civic life. The CA for high-need students was held in person on the campus of Goucher College, Maryland in July 2019. (The CA was held online in 2021, due to health safety concerns during the coronavirus pandemic. The study findings are consistent with the 2019 results, but are not presented here.) Participants were recruited nationwide through the Center's network of civic educators and advertisements, with preference given to those meeting high-need criteria. Pre-and post-Academy surveys were administered to students in each year. The surveys were administered online and proctored by the CERL team in person at Goucher College on the first day and last day of the program.

The Congressional Academy Intervention

The CA was designed to build high-need students' public voice and capacity for civic engagement. The two-week residential program began with teacher-facilitated community building and dialogue activities. These activities acknowledged each young person's unique background and prior experiences as core to the civic community being built at the Academy. Experienced classroom teachers served as mentor teachers. The mentors emphasized the assets that each participant brought to the CA. They facilitated group activities to increase students' understanding of one another and how to engage in effective and responsible civic dialogue. Students shared their knowledge and perspectives on historical and current issues. They practiced listening for understanding. They also learned how to present academic arguments on constitutional questions using reasoning and evidence. A variety of formal and informal activities supported community building. These included field trips of students and teachers to historic and civic sites in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. Students themselves organized evening activities, such as a talent show. Adult mentors and other students were continuously available to support participants on their path of community engagement and learning.

The CA immersed students in constitutional concepts and analysis of historical and current issues in America. The fourteen-day agenda focused on four major topics beginning with the historical foundations of the American constitutional political system and progressing to examine American governmental institutions and rights protected by constitutional amendments.

The four topics were:

1. The philosophical and historical foundations of the American political system and the creation of the U.S. Constitution
2. Changes in the U.S. Constitutional system that have furthered the ideals contained in its Preamble and the Declaration of Independence

3. The impact of the values and principles in the Constitution and its Preamble on American governmental institutions and practices
4. Rights protected by the Bill of Rights and subsequent amendments

Academic work featured intensive, interactive sessions with noted history and political science scholars and mentor teachers. The scholars challenged students to learn about and grapple with the fundamental principles and history related to the U.S. Constitution and its amendments. Mentor teachers engaged students in discussions, group activities, research, primary-source analysis, and democratic simulations. Classroom days were interspersed with field trips that emphasized place-based learning. Students' academic work culminated in a simulated congressional hearing where they prepared responses to questions relating to the U.S. Constitution. This was a challenging collaborative experience and performance-based assessment. Students practiced making reasoned, evidenced-based arguments; communicating their ideas in a clear and professional manner; working with others as a team; and responding to questions raised by adults.

Congressional Academy Participant Characteristics

We studied the 101 students of the 104 participants for whom there was complete data. Most of the CA students were aged 16 or 17 and were rising juniors and seniors in high school. There were 66 female students, 36 male students, and one student who identified as non-binary. The students were racially and ethnically diverse. (See Table 1.) Sixty-three of the students attended Title I schools (TIS) and 38 attended schools without a Title I designation (NTIS).

Table 1
Student Demographic Characteristics
(Number of Students—All that Applied)

Age	14	2
	15	6
	16	36
	17	55
	18	4
Grade	9	2
	10	11
	11	26
	12	62
	College Freshman	1
Gender	Female	66
	Male	35
	Non-Binary	1
Race*	Black/African American	16
	Latino/Hispanic	19
	Asian American	14
	White/Caucasian	46
	Multiple Races	7

Civic Knowledge

Civic knowledge was measured based on students' responses to 40 multiple choice items asked on a pretest, which established a baseline, and posttest administered on the final day of the CA. The questions tested core knowledge about American political history and government. Items dealt with founding principles, the U.S. Constitution, Supreme Court cases, elections, and voting, among other topics. (See Appendix A for question wording.) The knowledge items were constructed after consulting prior research, civics inventories, grade-appropriate civics and history tests, sample Advanced Placement (AP) government and history tests, and state civic education rubrics. The measures were not overly aligned with the CA curriculum. Each item was worth one point; the range of possible test scores was 0 to 40. The highest score by students on the pretest was 33 and on the posttest was 35. Additive indexes of the pretest and posttest knowledge items were created. The indexes were reliable; the Cronbach's α pretest was .877 and posttest α was .853

Paired samples t-tests were performed to determine the difference in pretest and posttest knowledge scores. For all students, the average pretest score was 21.61 and the average posttest score was 25.26. The mean difference in the pretest-posttest scores was 3.55 which was statistically significant at $p \leq .01$. Knowledge gain from the CA was greater for the students attending Title I schools. The mean score on the pretest was lower for Title I school students (20.66) than for students attending non-Title I schools (25.24). The average knowledge gain for TIS students (3.83) was greater than for NTI students (2.47). The knowledge gain for both groups was statistically significant at $p \leq .01$. (See Table 2.)

Table 2
Mean Scores on Students' Knowledge of History and Civics

	Title I School	NTI School	All Students
Pre	20.66	25.24	21.61
Post	24.49	27.71	25.55
x̄ Difference	3.83	2.47	3.55
Sign. t	.00	.00	.00

Civic Skills

It is difficult to measure students' civic skills directly, especially using survey methods. We examined students' confidence in their civic skills, which is an important precondition of action (Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011: 16). We used a hypothetical situation to determine if students thought that they could take a variety of civic actions to work toward solving a problem in their community. The item asked: If you found out about a problem in your community that you wanted to do something about, how well do you think you would be able to do each of the following: 1) research the problem, 2) create a plan to address the problem, 3) get other people to care about the problem, 4) attend a meeting about the problem, 5) express your views in front of a group of people, 6) write a letter to a local news outlet, 7) organize a petition, 8) contact a government official, 9) use social media to publicize the problem, and 10) use social media to organize people to take action to solve the problem. The students could respond that

they definitely could, probably could, not sure if they could, probably could not, and definitely could not take each action. An additive index of civic skills was computed (range 1-37) and was reliable. Cronbach's α was .838 for the pretest and .901 for the posttest.

Students' belief that they could take action to work toward solving a problem in their community increased markedly after completing the CA. The increase in civic skills was higher for the NTI students than for the TIS group. The mean pretest score for all students was 27.64 which increased to 29.00 for a difference of 1.36 (significant at $p \leq .01$). There was a modest change in mean scores for the TIS students. The pretest mean for this group was 27.58 which improved to 28.55, a mean difference of .96 that was significant at the .05 level. The NTI students started the CA with a mean score on the civic skills index of 27.85 which was similar to that of the TIS students. The posttest average for the NTI students rose to 30.75 representing a gain of 2.90 which was significant at $p \leq .01$. (See Table 3.)

Table 3
Mean Scores on Civic Skills Index

	Title I School	NTI School	All Students
Pretest	27.58	27.85	27.64
Posttest	28.55	30.75	29.00
x̄ Difference	.96	2.90	1.36
Sign. t	.05	.00	.00

Civic Dispositions

We examine students' acquisition of civic dispositions in three areas: 1) interest in and attention to American government and politics, 2) community engagement, and 3) civic duty.

Political Interest and Attention

Students were asked to respond to two items about their interest in and attention to American government and politics: 1) How interested are you in American government and politics? and 2) How much attention do you pay to media about government and politics? The responses were measured on 4-point Likert scales (scored low to high interest/attention). The items were combined in a political interest and attention index (range 1-6; 2019 Cronbach's α pretest was .686 and posttest was .540).

Students became more interested in and attentive to American government and politics after participating in the CA. A paired-sample t-test was performed using the political interest and attention index. The pretest mean score for all students was 4.76 and the posttest mean score was 5.21. The difference between the pretest and posttest means was .45 which was significant at $p \leq .01$. The pretest mean score for the TIS students (4.68) was lower than for the NTI students (5.04). The average political interest and attention scores for both groups increased significantly by the conclusion of the Academy. The difference in pretest and posttest mean scores was slightly higher for the NTI students (.57) than for the TIS students (.42). The difference of means for both groups was statistically significant at $p \leq .01$. (See Table 4.)

Table 4
Mean Scores on Political Interest and Attention

	Title I School	NTI School	All Students
Pre	4.68	5.04	4.76
Post	5.10	5.62	5.21
x̄ Difference	.42	.57	.45
Sign. t	.00	.00	.00

Community Engagement

Students' attitudes about community engagement were measured by their agreement with three statements: 1) It is my responsibility to be actively involved in my community, 2) I believe I can make a difference in my community, and 3) By working with others in the community, I can make things better. These items were combined in a community engagement index (range 1-9). Cronbach's α pretest was .716 and posttest was .853.

Many students came to the CA positively disposed toward taking part in their community, especially those attending NTI schools. Students gained an even greater sense of their responsibility to engage in their communities as well as their ability to work cooperatively to make a difference while at the Academy. The mean pretest community engagement score in for all students was 7.10 which increased to 7.58 (x̄ difference was .48, significance p≤.01). The increase in community engagement scores from pretest to posttest was greatest for the students attending Title I schools. TIS students (6.77) entered with lower community engagement scores than NTI students (7.33). The difference of pretest/posttest means was .54 for the TIS students and was statistically significant at the .01 level. The mean difference for the NTI students was .24 which was not significant. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
Mean Scores on Community Engagement

	Title I School	NIT School	All Students
Pretest	6.87	7.95	7.10
Posttest	7.41	8.19	7.58
x̄ Difference	.54	.24	.48
Sign. t	.00	n.s.	.00

Civic Duty

Civic duty was measured by students' responses to a battery of five items. How much do you agree that it is your responsibility to do the following: 1) vote in elections when you are eligible, 2) serve on a jury, 3) obey rules and laws, 4) keep informed about government and politics, and 5) serve in the military (range 1-12). Cronbach's α pretest was .578 and posttest was .601.

Students generally began the institute with a relatively strong sense of civic duty which increased over the course of the CA. The pretest mean score on the civic duty index was 8.15 which increased to 8.59, a gain of .44. NTI students (8.71) had a notably higher average score at the outset than TIS students (8.01). The TIS students' average score on the posttest improved to 8.47 (an increase of .46) while the mean score of NTI students was 9.10 (an increase of .39). The difference of means for TIS was significant at p≤.01 and approached statistical significance for NIT schools. (See Table 6.)

Table 6
Mean Scores on Civic Duty

	Title I School	NTI School	All Students
Pretest	8.01	8.71	8.15
Posttest	8.47	9.10	8.59
x̄ Difference	.46	.39	.44
Sign. t	.01	.06	.00

Project Citizen

Project Citizen promotes active and responsible participation in state and local government. Young people engage in cooperative, project-based learning as they work as a class to identify a problem in their community, research alternative policy-based solutions, develop a policy proposal to address the problem, and design a political action plan to convince public officials to adopt and implement the policy. The curriculum also supports students' development of English Language Arts (ELA) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) knowledge and skills. The Center runs a professional development program for teachers to increase their content knowledge, improve their capacity to effectively engage young people in PC, and foster their professional engagement with other educators.

The Project Citizen Intervention

PC is an instructional tool whose primary purpose is to prepare a new generation of citizens to be competent, confident, and committed to civic participation guided by fundamental democratic principles, values, and norms. The program engages young people in monitoring and influencing public policy. Focused on the role of local and state government in the federal system, the curriculum deepens students' understanding of what public policy is, how policies are created, who influences public policy, structures and institutions of government, and mechanisms for citizen participation in policymaking. While undertaking policy-focused projects, young people communicate with community members and public officials, collaborate with their peers, and activate their creativity, writing, research, problem-solving, analysis, and presentation skills. Students work as a team to address a problem in their community and engage as a class or group to develop a project. Classes typically participate in the program in a one- to three-month period, though they can complete the curriculum in a few weeks or work on their projects across a semester or academic year. Guided by teachers and/or adult volunteers and a textbook, students undertake a step-by-step process that includes:

1. Identifying a problem in their community that requires a public policy solution
2. Selecting a problem for the class to study
3. Gathering information on the problem chosen by the class
4. Developing a class portfolio
5. Presenting the portfolio
6. Reflecting on the learning experience

After selecting a project topic, students gather information on the problem. They make use of worksheets and tips provided in the textbook as they conduct research and interviews. Students often design and analyze surveys of community members affected by the policy issue. They create a portfolio that includes a tactile or electronic four-section display and documentation binder. While creating their portfolios, students examine alternative policy-based solutions to the problem and develop a class policy. Students analyze the evidence they have collected and examine the constitutionality of the alternatives. The display includes: (1) an explanation of the problem, (2) alternative policy solutions, (3) the policy they chose to address the problem, and (4) an action plan to engage with public officials and promote the proposed policy solution.

Students present their completed portfolios to their classmates, community members, and/or public officials at a portfolio showcase or public hearing. The presentation can be conducted in the class, at a school-wide meeting, or in a community setting with public officials whose duties relate to the policy topic. When used as performance-based assessment, the PC simulated hearing format includes a presentation by the class to evaluators, such as educators, members of local non-profit organizations, and public officials. Among the public policy issues tackled, students have successfully changed school discipline policies, improved school district nutritional policies, altered community vehicular traffic patterns, expanded drug-free school zone boundaries, created school-wide and district-wide anti-discrimination policies, and passed legislation protecting children from second-hand smoke.

Instructional Strategies and Approaches

Educators make use of a range of interactive approaches and instructional strategies to effectively engage young people in the PC curriculum. The Center's professional development for teachers includes practice in these strategies, coaching by experienced mentor teachers, and ongoing interaction with a professional learning community.

Collaborative Problem Solving. In P C, educators facilitate entire classes or groups of young people to take a project-based and inquiry-based approach to solving real-world challenges. Teachers guide students in learning how to engage in inquiry and problem solving, rather than teaching them "what to think." Using the PC textbook, educators provide students with a framework and guidance for collaborative inquiry. Students are organized into working groups to collaborate in each stage of the PC process. Teachers foster interpersonal communication and teamwork. They organize whole-class and group discussions that provide young people the opportunity to share their experiences, perspectives, evidence, and ideas with their peers. Presentation and reflection are also key elements of inquiry-based learning. PC students have

opportunities to present, receive feedback, and reflect upon their research and policy proposals in a variety of oral and written formats inside and, oftentimes, beyond the classroom.

Civil Dialogue. PC requires students to communicate with one another in order to make collective decisions throughout the inquiry process. Educators cultivate interpersonal communication that builds mutual understanding and cooperation. They set expectations for open and democratic discussions among students. Such expectations include taking turns to speak, listening and paying attention to others, assuming positive intentions, and posing questions that seek to deepen understanding and exploration of ideas presented. As students build their projects, they put ideas on the table and use civil dialogue and other tools to examine, organize, and consider the ideas for potential incorporation into the project.

Human-Centered Design. The PC process puts people at its core. As young people examine policy issues and develop solutions, they consider how these impact people in their community. Students design their class policy for people who face the selected problem. They talk to community members for their input and consider how the policies they design will affect the range of policy stakeholders.

Asset-Based Approach. PC recognizes that every learner has something to contribute and emphasizes the value of each learner's experiences and perspective. The curriculum provides opportunities for every learner to consider the issues they see around them, participate in civil discourse and decision-making, and have a role in building the class portfolio and presenting it to others. Throughout the program, educators reach into their toolbox of interactive strategies to engage learners in a variety of ways. They often use Universal Design for Learning principles, such as offering multiple methods of engagement, representation, and expression in activities. By providing students with many ways to communicate and contribute, educators elevate student voice. This increases the richness of classroom experience and the resulting project.

Project Citizen Participant Characteristics

The Project Citizen Research Program (PCRP) evaluates the effectiveness of the PC curriculum intervention for middle and high school students over the course of three years. The results from the Year One study, conducted during the academic year 2020-21, are reported here. The quantitative impact evaluation of the PCRP employed a randomized control trial (RCT) design that assigned teachers and their students to an intervention group that participated in PC and a control group of students who took a standard civics, social studies, American government, or American history class. Teachers were recruited nationwide through the Center's extensive network through personal outreach to contacts, advertising through education-related publications, and postings on social media. Qualified applicants were accredited public or private middle and high school teachers who taught courses in which the PC program could be incorporated. All students whose teachers were enrolled in the PCRP—either the PC intervention group or the control group—were eligible to participate in the research project. A total of 1,932 students took part in the study; 1,184 were in the PC intervention group and 748 were in the control group. Quantitative data for students were collected through pretest surveys administered prior to the start of their PC instruction (intervention group) or general civics, social studies, government, or history class (control group). Posttests were given to students at the conclusion of

their PC or general civics instruction. The surveys were administered online during class periods and were proctored by teachers.

While there was no explicit intention to target teachers from schools serving high-need and economically disadvantaged students to participate in the PCRP, a majority of the teachers served these students. Fifty-eight percent of teachers in the intervention group and 59% in the control group taught in Title I schools which receive federal funding to assist students with the highest concentrations of poverty meet challenging academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Nearly 80% of teachers in both groups taught a large percentage of high-need students defined as having at least 30% of students who are provided with free or reduced cost lunches, students living in poverty, minority students, students performing far below grade level, English language learners, students with disabilities, students who are homeless or in foster care, students served by rural local educational agencies, disconnected or migrant youth, and incarcerated youth. Ninety-six percent of both the intervention and control group teachers were from public schools. A higher percentage of PC teachers (26%) than control group teachers (17%) taught in rural schools. More control group teachers (36%) were situated in urban schools than PC teachers (27%). An equal percentage (47%) of teachers in both groups worked in suburban schools. The students participating in the PCRP study were racially and ethnically diverse. Overall, 8% of students identified as Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI), 14% as Black, 17% as Latinx, 49% as White, and 12% as multiracial. The racial composition of the PC and the control group students was similar. There was a difference in the gender ratios of the PC and the control group students. The intervention group consisted of 53% female, 45% male, and 2% gender non-binary students. The control group students included a higher percentage of males (55%) than females (44%), with 1% identifying as non-binary.

Analysis

Indexes of students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions were the dependent measures in the study. Identical items were asked on the pretest and posttests. Students' grade level, gender, and racial and ethnic identity were independent variables in the analysis. Middle school students were in 4th through 8th grades and high school students were in 9th through 12th grades. The categories of racial and ethnic identity were Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Black, Latinx, Mixed Race, and White. Gender was coded as female (1) and male (2). A variable indicated respondents' inclusion in the intervention (coded 1) or control (coded 2) group.

We performed difference of means tests for the dependent measures of civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. We began with a basic comparison of the differences in mean scores between the PC intervention group and the control group on the dependent variable for middle and high school students using paired samples t-tests. The posttest mean difference is the difference between the posttest scores for the PC and control groups. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was performed to determine if there were differences in the posttest mean scores on the dependent variables controlling for the pretest scores. The ANCOVA analysis adjusts students' mean posttest scores by their pretest scores. In each model, the dependent variable was the posttest score and the pretest score was entered as a covariate. PC/control group and grade level were

entered as fixed factors. We present the adjusted mean posttest scores for middle and high school students comparing the PC and control groups on categories of race and gender.

Civic Knowledge

Students' civic knowledge was based on twenty items relating to general knowledge of the public policy process, federalism, branches of the U.S. government, government departments involved in the policy process, interest groups, and nongovernmental organizations. All of these content areas are addressed by the PC curriculum. However, the items were not overly aligned with the intervention and were based on established measures with known reliability. The civic knowledge items were combined into pretest and posttest indexes that were reliable (Cronbach's α pretest=.850, posttest=.871). The scores ranged from 1 to 18 on the pretest and 1 to 19 on the posttest. (See Appendix B for question wording.)

Students in both middle school and high school who participated in the PC program gained significantly more civic knowledge than students in the control condition. The baseline mean values for the middle school intervention (4.67) and control (4.56) groups were similar. The average scores of the PC group increased by two and a half points compared to slightly more than one point for the control group. The posttest mean difference between the middle school PC and control groups was 1.44. The baseline knowledge score for the high school intervention group was slightly higher than that of the control group. The intervention group gained an average of 2.65 points on the posttest compared to about one point for the control group. The difference in the PC/control group average posttest scores was 1.69. All of the mean differences were statistically significant at p≤.01. (See Table 7.)

Table 7
Middle and High School Civic Knowledge
Difference of Means (t-test)

	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	Posttest $\bar{x}$ Difference PC/Control
Middle School			
Pretest	4.67	4.56	
Posttest	7.17	5.73	1.44
$\bar{x}$ Difference	2.48	1.17	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	.00
High School			
Pretest	7.52	6.93	
Posttest	10.17	7.89	1.69
$\bar{x}$ Difference	2.65	.96	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	.00

We found significant differences in the mean civic knowledge scores of the students in the PC and control groups based on the combined effects of race and gender. Middle school AAPI, Latinx, and Black female students who took part in PC scored significantly higher than their counterparts in the control group. Male AAPI, Latinx, and Mixed Race students in the

intervention group had higher posttest scores than those in the control group. The knowledge gap between the intervention and control group students for the race and gender interaction was larger for middle school females than males for AAPI (4.06/2.02), Latinx (3.12/2.31), and Black (2.69/.89) students. The PC/control group difference for Mixed Race students favored males (.36/1.96). The findings for middle school White students were small and nonsignificant. At the high school level, there were statistically significant differences between the PC and control group for female AAPI, Black, and Mixed Race students. The posttest knowledge scores of male AAPI, Black, Mixed Race and White students who had the PC intervention were higher than those of students in the control group. The effects of race and gender were less consistent at the high school than at the middle school level. Mixed Race female PC students in high school scored higher than male students (5.26/2.89). There were small differences between female and male AAPI (3.86/3.93), Black (1.88/2.24), White (1.25/1.94), and Latinx (-.26/1.48) students favoring males. (See Table 8.)

Table 8
Middle and High School Civic Knowledge
Mean Differences for PC and Control Groups by Gender and Race

Middle School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	9.06	5.00	3.81	3.46	4.06	.00
Black	8.69	6.00	4.02	2.31	2.69	.00
Latinx	7.48	4.36	2.96	2.67	3.12	.00
Mixed Race	6.67	6.31	2.79	2.85	.36	n.s.
White	7.13	6.09	3.18	2.82	1.04	.09
Middle School Male	$\bar{x}$ **PC**	$\bar{x}$ **Control**	α **PC**	α **Control**	$\bar{x}$ **Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	8.79	6.77	2.97	3.17	2.02	.00
Black	5.89	5.00	1.90	4.12	.89	n.s.
Latinx	7.59	5.28	3.69	1.92	2.31	.00
Mixed Race	6.25	4.29	2.92	2.57	1.96	.00
White	6.78	5.83	3.16	3.30	.95	n.s.
High School Female	$\bar{x}$ **PC**	$\bar{x}$ **Control**	α **PC**	α **Control**	$\bar{x}$ **Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	12.19	8.33	4.00	2.80	3.86	.00
Black	8.29	6.41	3.48	2.90	1.88	.00
Latinx	8.74	9.00	3.45	4.89	-.26	n.s.
Mixed Race	13.04	7.78	2.43	3.26	5.26	.00
White	10.40	9.15	3.51	3.12	1.25	n.s.
High School Male	$\bar{x}$ **PC**	$\bar{x}$ **Control**	α **PC**	α **Control**	$\bar{x}$ **Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	13.24	9.31	3.81	4.97	3.93	.00
Black	7.91	5.67	3.46	3.71	2.24	.00
Latinx	9.04	7.56	3.66	4.89	1.48	n.s.
Mixed Race	10.19	7.30	3.33	3.56	2.89	.00
White	10.33	8.39	4.22	3.60	1.94	.00

Civic Skills

Civic skills were measured by thirteen items which assessed students' competence to deal with a problem in their community. (See Appendix B for question wording.) Students were asked if they felt they could identify a problem, research the problem, get other people to care about the problem, work cooperatively with others to solve the problem, develop an action plan, evaluate alternative solutions, meet with others about the problem, express views in front of a group, contact officials, publicize the problem, and organize people to take action. The response options were: I definitely can, I probably can, I don't know if I can, I probably can't, and I definitely can't. The additive pretest and posttest civic skills indexes were reliable (Cronbach's α pretest=.919, posttest=.929). The indexes ranged from a low of 1 (low competence) to a high of 53 (high competence).

The civic skills of students who had participated in PC improved significantly more than the civic skills of students who had taken a conventional civics class. The difference in scores was greater for high school students than middle school students. The pretest/posttest mean score difference for middle school students in the PC group (2.79) was significantly higher than that of the control group (1.06). The difference between the PC and control group posttest scores was 2.84. A similar pattern was evident at the high school level, with a pretest/post mean difference of 3.57 for the PC students compared to 1.49 for the control group. The pretest/posttest mean difference between the PC and control groups was 2.84. (See Table 9.)

Table 9
Middle and High School Civic Skills
Difference of Means (t-test)

	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	Posttest $\bar{x}$ Difference PC/Control
Middle School			
Pretest	33.27	32.16	
Posttest	36.06	33.22	2.84
$\bar{x}$ Difference	2.79	1.06	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	.00
High School			
Pretest	35.08	34.44	
Posttest	38.65	35.93	2.71
$\bar{x}$ Difference	3.57	1.49	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	.00

There were significant differences in the development of civic skills as a result of participating in PC based on the combined effects of race and gender. Among females in middle school, Black students (42.88) in the PC intervention group had the highest average civic skills score, followed by Latinx (38.50), White (37.89), Mixed Race (37.53), and AAPI (34.76) students. The largest differences between the PC and the control groups were for Black (8.38) and Latinx (6.85) students. All of the PC/control group differences for females in middle school were statistically significant. The average civic skills scores for PC students were lower for male

middle school students than for female students for every racial and ethnic group except AAPIs. Latinx male students (37.25) had the highest mean score compared to AAPI (35.06), Black (34.00), White (33.64), and Mixed Race (33.20) students. All of the differences between the PC/control groups were statistically significant with the exception of the scores for Mixed Race students. Among female high school students, Black students (41.30) had the highest average civic skills score followed by White (40.47), AAPI (40.28), Latinx (39.54), and Mixed Race (37.53) students. The largest difference in scores between the PC and control group students were found for AAPI (6.96) and Mixed Race (3.22) female students. All of the PC/control group differences were statistically significant except for Latinx students. High school females who took part in PC scored higher than their male counterparts in every racial and ethnic group category. AAPI male high school students in the PC group (38.78) had the highest average score followed by White (37.41), Black (36.67), Mixed Race (33.20), and Latinx (32.44) students. The largest differences in mean scores between the PC and control group students was evident for AAPI (5.96) and White (1.99) students. Male Latinx students in the control group scored higher than their counterparts in the PC group. The other PC/control group differences were small and nonsignificant. (See Table 10.)

Table 10
Middle and High School Civic Skills
Mean Differences for PC and Control Groups by Gender and Race

Middle School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	34.76	32.44	3.81	4.14	2.32	.02
Black	42.88	34.50	4.02	2.31	8.38	.01
Latinx	38.50	35.35	2.96	2.67	6.85	.01
Mixed Race	37.53	34.31	2.79	2.88	3.22	.01
White	37.89	34.93	3.18	2.82	2.96	.01
Middle School Male	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	35.06	29.73	2.97	3.17	5.33	.01
Black	34.00	29.37	1.90	4.12	4.63	.01
Latinx	37.25	32.69	3.69	1.92	4.56	.01
Mixed Race	33.20	32.23	3.03	2.57	-0.97	n.s.
White	33.64	32.01	3.16	3.30	1.63	.01
High School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	40.28	33.33	4.00	2.80	6.96	.01
Black	41.30	38.78	3.48	2.90	2.52	.02
Latinx	39.54	40.60	3.45	4.89	-1.06	n.s.
Mixed Race	37.53	34.31	3.43	3.26	3.22	.01
White	40.47	38.08	3.51	3.12	2.39	.01
High School Male	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	38.78	32.82	3.81	4.97	5.96	.01
Black	36.67	35.67	3.46	3.70	1.00	n.s.

Latinx	32.44	35.00	3.66	4.53	-2.56	.02
Mixed Race	33.20	32.23	3.33	3.56	0.97	n.s.
White	37.41	35.42	4.22	4.60	1.99	.04

Civic Dispositions

We analyzed three measures of civic dispositions—political interest and attention, community engagement, and civic duty. These were the same three dimensions that were analyzed in the CA study.

Political Interest and Attention

We created an index of political interest and attention that consisted of four variables. Political interest was measured by the item: How interested are you in American government and politics? (not very interested, somewhat interested, very interested). Three items tapped attention: 1) How much attention do you pay to media about media about government and politics? 2) How much attention do you pay to issues that are affecting your community? and 3) How much attention do you pay to issues that are affecting your school? (not much, some, a lot). The index ranged from 1 to 9, with a high score indicating greater interest and attention. The pretest index reliability based on Cronbach's α was .621 and posttest was .660.

The level of interest and attention to politics of middle and high school students who participated in PC increased significantly. The average score on the interest and attention of middle school PC students increased by .61 from pretest to posttest. The average posttest score of the PC group was .54 higher than that of the control group. The scores of high school students who participated in PC increased by an average of .67 compared to .41 for the control group. The difference in posttest means for the PC and the control group was small and nonsignificant. (See Table 11.)

Table 11
Political Interest and Attention
Difference of Means (t-test)

	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	Posttest $\bar{x}$ Difference PC/Control
Middle School			
Pretest	6.80	6.71	
Posttest	7.41	6.87	.54
$\bar{x}$ Difference	.61	.16	
Sign. Difference	.00	n.s.	.01
High School			
Pretest	7.54	7.59	
Posttest	8.21	8.00	.21
$\bar{x}$ Difference	.67	.41	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	n.s.

The relationship between gender and race on political interest was limited based on the mean comparisons of the PC and control groups, especially for middle school. Among middle school females, the only significant pretest/posttest differences were for Latinx (1.50) and AAPI (.91) students, as participating in PC increased interest and attention. All but one of the mean differences between the PC and control group male middle school students were small and nonsignificant, the exception being Black students where control group students scored higher. The posttest interest and attention scores for high school females were higher among the PC participants for AAPI (1.71), Black (.94), and Mixed Race (.64) students. The findings for high school male students were mixed. AAPI PC students (.63) scored significantly higher on the posttest than those in the control group. However, the difference in mean scores for Mixed Race (-1.94) and Latinx (-.71) students favored the control group. (See Table 12.)

Table 12
Middle and High School Political Interest and Attention
Mean Differences for PC and Control Groups by Gender and Race

Middle School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	5.00	4.09	1.76	1.76	.91	.05
Black	5.22	5.22	2.99	2.99	0	n.s.
Latinx	5.93	4.43	1.22	1.22	1.50	.00
Mixed Race	4.71	4.21	1.36	1.36	.50	n.s
White	4.71	4.42	1.37	1.37	.29	n.s.
Middle School Male	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	4.25	3.83	1.52	1.38	.42	n.s.
Black	3.71	4.75	1.79	1.66	-1.04	.00
Latinx	4.63	4.52	1.45	1.77	.11	n.s.
Mixed Race	3.94	3.76	1.46	1.86	.18	n.s.
White	4.32	4.08	2.03	1.66	.24	n.s.
High School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	6.04	4.33	1.88	1.03	1.71	.00
Black	5.57	4.63	1.95	1.42	.94	.00
Latinx	4.94	5.50	1.58	2.81	-.56	n.s.
Mixed Race	5.71	5.07	1.48	1.84	.64	.05
White	4.99	4.94	2.05	1.63	.05	n.s.
High School Male	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	5.74	5.11	1.60	1.40	.63	.05
Black	4.85	4.47	1.91	2.09	.38	n.s.
Latinx	4.71	5.42	1.76	1.94	-.71	.05
Mixed Race	4.29	6.23	2.00	1.64	-1.94	.00
White	4.92	4.91	2.11	2.07	.01	n.s.

Community Engagement

Three items were combined to form a community engagement index: 1) It is my responsibility to get actively involved in my community, 2) I believe I can make a difference in my community, and 3) By working with others in the community, I can make things better (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree). The index ranged from 1 to 11, with higher scores indicating greater orientations toward community engagement. The Cronbach's α for the pretest index was .714 and for the posttest index was .712.

Students who received the PC intervention showed greater gains on the community engagement index than students in the control group. Middle school students' scores on the index improved by an average of 2.79 points compared to the control group students, whose scores increased by 1.06 points. The average difference between the posttest scores of the PC and control group students was 2.84. The average improvement in the scores of high school students in the PC group (3.57) was higher than for middle school students. The difference in pretest/posttest means for the high school PC and control group was 2.72. All of the mean differences were statistically significant at p≤.00. (See Table 13.)

Table 13
Community Engagement
Difference of Means (t-test)

	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	Posttest $\bar{x}$ Difference PC/Control
Middle School			
Pretest	33.27	32.16	
Posttest	36.06	33.22	2.84
$\bar{x}$ Difference	2.79	1.06	
Sign. Difference	.00	.02	.00
High School			
Pretest	35.08	34.44	
Posttest	38.65	35.93	2.72
$\bar{x}$ Difference	3.57	1.49	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	.00

Significant gains in positive orientations toward community engagement were largely limited to middle school females. The pretest/posttest differences in PC and control group scores on the community engagement index were largest for Black students (1.56) followed by Latinx (1.33), White (.87), and AAPI (.83) students. The relationship was not statistically significant for Mixed Race female middle schoolers. The only statistically significant difference between the PC and control group scores among middle school males was found for AAPI students (1.65). For high school students, the only significant difference in PC/control group scores was for White female students (.73). (See Table 14.)

Table 14
Middle and High School Community Engagement
Mean Differences for PC and Control Groups by Gender and Race

Middle School Female	x̄ PC	x̄ Control	α PC	α Control	x̄ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	7.19	6.36	2.10	1.80	.83	.05
Black	7.44	5.88	2.29	1.53	1.56	.00
Latinx	7.46	6.13	2.18	2.13	1.33	.00
Mixed Race	7.06	6.51	1.30	2.02	.55	n.s.
White	7.32	6.45	2.01	2.42	.87	.05
Middle School Male	**x̄ PC**	**x̄ Control**	**α PC**	**α Control**	**x̄ Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	7.20	5.55	1.97	1.94	1.65	.00
Black	5.17	5.63	1.47	3.37	-.46	n.s
Latinx	6.42	6.68	2.40	1.88	-.26	n.s.
Mixed Race	5.82	5.96	2.77	2.50	-.19	n.s.
White	6.13	6.33	2.13	2.14	-.20	n.s.
High School Female	**x̄ PC**	**x̄ Control**	**α PC**	**α Control**	**x̄ Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	7.45	7.00	2.04	2.12	.45	n.s.
Black	7.31	7.28	1.54	1.74	.03	n.s.
Latinx	7.33	7.00	1.77	2.06	.33	n.s.
Mixed Race	7.19	7.33	2.24	2.15	-.14	n.s.
White	7.43	6.60	2.11	1.86	.73	.05
High School Male	**x̄ PC**	**x̄ Control**	**α PC**	**α Control**	**x̄ Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	7.43	6.93	2.01	1.83	.50	n.s.
Black	6.89	6.51	1.98	2.15	.38	n.s.
Latinx	6.21	6.69	2.25	2.60	-.48	n.s.
Mixed Race	6.50	6.84	2.16	2.11	-.34	n.s.
White	7.02	6.71	2.04	2.44	.32	n.s.

Civic Duty

Students' sense of civic duty was measured with five items which asked them how much of a responsibility they felt to: 1) Vote in elections when you are eligible, 2) Obey rules and laws, 3) Follow news about government every day, 4) Get actively involved in your community, and 5) Serve in the military (a top priority, a great deal of responsibility, not much responsibility). The items were combined in an additive index that ranged from 1 to 11; a high score indicated a great deal of responsibility. The reliability of the pretest index based on Cronbach's α was .687 and the posttest was .671.

There were small pretest/posttest improvements in mean civic duty scores for middle and high school students who took part in PC. There were no statistically significant changes in civic duty for the control group. The differences in the average posttest scores between the PC and

control group students was modest but significant at both the middle school (.40) and high school (.44) levels. (See Table 15.)

Table 15
Civic Duty
Difference of Means (t-test)

	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	Posttest $\bar{x}$ Difference PC/Control
Middle School			
Pretest	4.45	4.40	
Posttest	4.75	4.35	.40
$\bar{x}$ Difference	.30	-.05	
Sign. Difference	.00	n.s.	.00
High School			
Pretest	4.31	4.37	
Posttest	4.93	4.49	.44
$\bar{x}$ Difference	.62	-.12	
Sign. Difference	.00	.00	.00

Few significant differences in civic duty were evident based on race and gender. Middle school female AAPI, Black, and Latinx students were the one exception, as their posttest civic duty scores were significantly higher than the control group. There was a small difference in scores favoring AAPI, female, high school students in the PC group. The between-group difference of Black, male, high school students was weak and favored students in the control group. (See Table 16.)

Table 16
Middle and High School Civic Duty
Mean Differences for PC and Control Groups by Gender and Race

Middle School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	5.69	4.20	1.74	1.98	1.49	.00
Black	5.78	5.00	2.68	2.26	.78	.05
Latinx	5.85	5.13	1.77	2.69	.72	.05
Mixed Race	5.24	4.80	1.82	1.83	.44	n.s.
White	5.11	4.94	2.25	1.89	.17	n.s.
Middle School Male	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	4.93	4.50	2.12	1.61	.43	n.s.
Black	3.83	4.42	0.75	2.22	-.59	n.s.
Latinx	5.50	5.73	1.45	1.98	-.23	n.s.
Mixed Race	5.57	5.25	1.62	2.62	.32	n.s.
White	4.88	5.23	2.07	2.32	-.35	n.s.
High School Female	$\bar{x}$ PC	$\bar{x}$ Control	α PC	α Control	$\bar{x}$ Diff.	Sign. Diff.

	x̄ PC	x̄ Control	α PC	α Control	x̄ Diff.	Sign. Diff.
AAPI	5.71	4.80	2.20	1.30	.91	.05
Black	5.11	4.93	1.69	1.91	.18	n.s.
Latinx	5.40	5.00	2.26	2.75	.40	n.s.
Mixed Race	5.00	5.00	2.19	2.28	.00	n.s.
White	5.37	5.34	2.06	1.87	.03	n.s.
High School Male	**x̄ PC**	**x̄ Control**	**α PC**	**α Control**	**x̄ Diff.**	**Sign. Diff.**
AAPI	5.44	5.31	2.37	1.81	.13	n.s.
Black	4.88	5.58	2.68	2.41	-.70	.05
Latinx	5.07	4.77	2.74	1.89	.30	n.s.
Mixed Race	4.72	4.75	2.49	2.41	-.03	n.s.
White	5.18	5.13	2.46	2.58	.05	n.s.

Discussion

The Congressional Academy and Project Citizen sought to improve students' civic engagement using different pedagogic strategies. The CA's intensive, residential approach combined scholar lectures, interactive sessions that encouraged student participation and collaboration, a simulated congressional hearing, and field trips. The PC classroom intervention used project-based learning to convey the knowledge, principles, and skills conducive to citizen engagement in the public policy process. The research revealed that both approaches contributed to students' acquisition of civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The findings for civic knowledge and skills were generally more robust than for dispositions which is consistent with prior research. We also found significant differences in the development of civic orientations associated with SES (Title I school designation) for CA and based on race and gender for PC.

All students who attended the CA gained significant civic knowledge as measured by their pretest/posttest scores on the knowledge index. Students attending Title I schools began the Academy with lower knowledge scores than non-TIS students. Their average score on the posttest increased by nearly 4 points compared to 2½ points for their non-TIS colleagues. Participation in the CA also enhanced students' perceptions of their civic skills. However, the gains were greatest for students attending non-Title I schools. Students' levels of political interest and attention, community engagement, and civic duty increased after participating in the CA. The scores of students from Title I schools increased more than those from non-TIS on community engagement and civic duty.

The PC research was conducted on a large, diverse sample of students which allowed us to examine breakdowns by race and gender. Students participating in PC had significant increases in civic knowledge that were markedly higher than knowledge gains of students who took a traditional civics class. Consistent with prior findings about gender differences in knowledge attainment, the increases for middle school females generally were higher than for males. This trend was not apparent at the high school level. The differences between the PC and control group mean knowledge scores were higher for AAPI, Black, and Latinx female high school students than for White female students. AAPI, Black, and Mixed Race male students had greater gains than White male students.

The civic skills of students who experienced PC increased more than those of students in traditional civics classes. The average improvement was greater for middle school students than high school students. The adjusted mean scores middle school AAPI, Black, and Latinx middle school students were higher than those of White students for both males and females. The difference between the PC and control group scores was higher for middle school females for all racial groups except AAPIs. At the high school level, female students scored higher on civic skills than male students in every racial group. Black females had the highest average score of all high school students on the civic skills index. The largest difference between the PC and control group students on civic skills was found for AAPI female and male students.

We found significant increases in PC students' levels of political interest and attention, community engagement, and civic duty that were greater than the control group's scores. The findings were strongest for civic engagement, which corresponds to the PC intervention's focus on developing students' orientations toward participation in the public policy process and community affairs. The race and gender differences in students' development of civic dispositions were less robust than the findings for civic knowledge and skills. Many of the race and gender differences between the PC and control group were small and nonsignificant. The one trend worth noting is that middle school females' scores on civic engagement increased significantly more for the PC group than the control group for AAPI, Black, Latinx, and White students.

Conclusion

Disparities in educational opportunities widen the gaps in civic engagement and civic empowerment that exist between high-need and more privileged students (Schroder and Neumayr, 2021). These inequities in civic education were exacerbated further during the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been some encouraging trends in youth civic engagement, including an increase in political engagement and a rise in turnout among the youngest voters. Young people's sense of hope for the future and their faith in their fellow Americans has been rising, especially among people of color (Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, 2021). However, these trends mask the persistent inequities in engagement based on SES, race, and gender (Levine, 2009). The disproportionate exclusion of high-need students, including those who are not college-bound, from quality civic education creates barriers to engagement, foments distrust in government, and breeds alienation from community affairs. High-need students lack opportunities to learn how to engage with government and political processes, represent their own interests, and promote change.

Quality civic education can be effective in improving the circumstances of high-need students. Our research reinforces prior findings that diverse students from lower SES backgrounds can gain civic awareness and become more engaged through well-designed curriculum interventions, public works projects, and social justice service programs (Youniss and Yates, 1997). Civic education can advance the social mobility of the urban poor (Sidhu, 2013). Young people care deeply about critical issues, but have difficulty conceiving of governmental solutions, especially during the present period of political upheaval (Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, 2021). Giving high-need students greater agency in the civics classroom through active learning approaches that address topics they find personally

relevant, such as voting rights, guns and school violence, police and race, and immigration, can work to close engagement and opportunities gaps (Swalwell, 2015; Spector, 2019). The imperative to improve civic education in the nation's secondary schools for high-need students has never been more pressing.

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APPENDIX A

Political Knowledge Question Wording
Congressional Academy

The rights to life, liberty, and property are considered
- × civil rights
- ✓ natural rights
- × state's rights
- × personal rights
- × I don't know

John Locke's theory of the social contract states that
- ✓ people agree to live under a government with the power to make and enforce laws
- × monarchs should rule over the people and have more power than legislatures
- × stronger and smarter people should control the life, liberty, and property of the weak
- × people have the right to exist in the state of nature without the interference of government
- × I don't know

In a republican government
- × people directly participate in all government decisions
- × aristocrats hold power over the common people
- × government representatives are not accountable to the people
- ✓ citizens elect representatives who make laws and run the government
- × I don't know

The Articles of Confederation
- × declared independence from Great Britain
- × set up a strong national government
- × gave Congress the right to collect taxes
- ✓ was the country's first national constitution
- × I don't know

Which of the following democratic ideals is most directly reflected in the Declaration of Independence?
- ✓ Social contract
- × Federalism
- × Representation
- × Republicanism
- × I don't know

The most important difference between the Constitution of 1787 and the Articles of Confederation was that the Constitution
- × made states sovereign over the national government, while the Articles were based on national sovereignty

- × created a dominant national executive, while the Articles established a dominant national legislature
- × provided for a presidential system of government, while the Articles provided for a parliamentary system of government
- ✓ provided for a strong national government with many powers, while the articles created a weak central government with few independent powers
- × I don't know

The idea in the Magna Carta that both the government and the people must obey the law is known as
- × separation of powers
- × federal government
- ✓ rule of law
- × limited rights
- × I don't know

What happened at the Philadelphia Convention in 1787?
- × war was declared on Great Britain
- ✓ a national constitution was written to create a new government
- × state constitutions were drafted to raise taxes
- × John Adams was elected president of the new nation
- × I don't know

During the ratification debates, who were the Federalists?
- ✓ People who supported the U.S. Constitution
- × People who pledged their support to Great Britain
- × People who refused to follow the new Constitution
- × People who opposed setting up a national government
- × I don't know

The three-fifths clause in Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution was designed to give Congress
- × the right to tax the public
- × give the states the ability to regulate foreign trade
- × end the slave trade
- ✓ resolve conflicts over slavery between northern and southern states
- × I don't know

The supremacy clause in the U.S. Constitution states that
- × the federal government has the right to regulate interstate commerce
- × only Congress has the right to declare war
- ✓ federal law takes precedence over state law when the laws conflict
- × the Supreme Court has the power to overturn legislative actions
- × I don't know

Which of the following clauses in the Constitution justifies the "implied powers doctrine"?
- ✓ The necessary and proper clause
- ✗ The contract clauses
- ✗ The privileges and immunities clause
- ✗ The executive power clause
- ✗ I don't know

The Constitution requires that the President's nomination to the Supreme Court be approved by the Senate. This is an example of
- ✗ legislative supremacy
- ✗ federalism
- ✗ judicial review
- ✓ checks and balances
- ✗ I don't know

The national government is divided into three branches each with a distinct purpose. This is known as
- ✗ federalism
- ✓ separation of powers
- ✗ popular sovereignty
- ✗ checks and balances
- ✗ I don't know

The term "bicameralism" refers to the
- ✓ establishment of two legislative chambers with different structures and rules
- ✗ president having veto power over both houses of Congress
- ✗ members of the House of Representatives serving two-year terms of office
- ✗ checks that Congress has over the federal bureaucracy
- ✗ I don't know

Which part of government is designed to respond most directly to the will of the people?
- ✗ the presidency
- ✗ the Senate
- ✓ the House of Representatives
- ✗ the Supreme Court
- ✗ I don't know

The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the authority to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises. This is an example of
- ✗ an implied power
- ✗ a direct power
- ✗ a reserved power
- ✓ an enumerated power
- ✗ I don't know

What are the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution called?
- × The Preamble
- × Articles of Confederation
- × Civil Rights
- ✓ Bill of Rights
- × I don't know

What proportion of state legislatures must ratify an amendment in order for it to become part of the Constitution?
- ✓ Three-fourths
- × Two-thirds
- × Three-fifths
- × A simple majority
- × I don't know

Substantive due process
- ✓ protects citizens from unjust laws
- × guarantees economic liberty
- × protects citizenship rights
- × applies due process provisions to the states
- × I don't know

The incorporation doctrine
- × provides that the Bill of Rights guarantees legal representation to anyone accused of a crime
- × ensures that powers not delegate to the national government by the Constitution are reserved for the states
- ✓ makes parts of the Bill of Rights applicable to the states through the Due Process clause of the 14th amendment
- × allows the Supreme Court to interpret state laws when making decisions about federal cases
  I don't know

In the case of Dred Scott v Sanford, the Supreme Court ruled that
- × slavery could be abolished in the states by executive order
- ✓ slaves were property under the 5th Amendment
- × men of African descent could be citizens and have voting rights
- × that the Missouri Compromise was constitutionally sound
- × I don't know

The Battle of Gettysburg was significant because
- × the Civil War ended soon after the battle
- × the Union army was forced to retreat
- ✓ it was a turning point in the Civil War and a setback for the Confederacy
- × it greatly prolonged the Civil War

× I don't know

What historical document does Abraham Lincoln allude to in the first sentence of the Gettysburg Address?
- × The Articles of Confederation
- ✓ The Declaration of Independence
- × The U.S. Constitution
- × The Emancipation Proclamation
- × I don't know

Following the Civil War, which Constitutional amendment was designed to overturn the Dred Scott decision?
- × 12th Amendment
- × 13th Amendment
- ✓ 14th Amendment
- × 15th Amendment
- × I don't know

The "separate but equal" doctrine as defined by the Supreme Court in Plessy v. Ferguson
- ✓ proclaimed racially segregated facilities are constitutional if they are of equal quality
- × ordered the use of busing to achieve integration of educational institutions
- × provides that all citizens are guaranteed the right to equal protection under the Constitution
- × was upheld in the case of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka
- × I don't know

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was aimed at correcting
- × unfair immigration policies
- × limitations on free speech and press
- × segregation in the armed forces
- ✓ racial and gender discrimination
- × I don't know

President Lyndon Johnson called on Congress to pass comprehensive voting rights legislation following this event
- × Freedom Rides
- ✓ Selma to Montgomery March
- × Greensboro Lunch Counter Sit In
- × Montgomery Bus Boycott
- × I don't know

In the case of Shelby County v. Holder, the U.S. Supreme Court
- × upheld Sections 4 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act
- × ruled that Congress had the right to hold states accountable for violations of the Voting Rights Act

- ✓ declared Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional
- ✗ declared the entire Voting Rights Act unconstitutional
- ✗ I don't know

The exclusionary rule established in the Supreme Court case of Mapp v. Ohio holds
- ✓ that evidence gained from an unreasonable search and seizure violates the 14th Amendment
- ✗ that forced self-incriminatory statements gathered in the course of an investigation violate the 5th Amendment
- ✗ that newly-discovered evidence in a criminal case cannot be used at trial
- ✗ that evidence in plain sight that is obtained without a warrant is always inadmissible in a court of law
- ✗ I don't know

The power of the Supreme Court to declare laws unconstitutional is called
- ✗ judicial pardon
- ✗ judicial sanctity
- ✗ judicial notification
- ✓ judicial review
- ✗ I don't know

Supreme Court justices
- ✗ are elected by the people for a fixed term
- ✗ are elected by the people for life
- ✗ are appointed by the president for a fixed term
- ✓ are appointed by the president for life
- ✗ I don't know

The Framers of the Constitution believed that political parties were
- ✗ helpful in getting people to turn out to vote
- ✓ factions that would fight for their own self interests
- ✗ groups that would protect the equal rights of all citizens
- ✗ important to include in the Constitution
- ✗ I don't know

All of the following are powers of the president granted in the Constitution EXCEPT the power to
- ✓ act as chief legislator
- ✗ convene Congress in special session
- ✗ serve as commander-in-chief of the armed forces
- ✗ fill executive branch positions when Congress is in recess
- ✗ I don't know

Which of the following is a legal requirement for presidential candidates?
- ✗ Must be at least 30 years of age or older

- ✓ Must be a natural born or naturalized citizen
- × Must be a resident of the United States for 14 years
- × Must be a member of the Republican or Democratic party
- × I don't know

Congress sends a bill to the president for action when
- × a conference committee can't reach a resolution
- × the bill passes one house and is rejected in the other
- ✓ an identical bill is passed in both houses
- × neither house can reach a majority
- × I don't know

The Nineteenth Amendment passed in 1920
- ✓ gave women the right to vote
- × prohibited literacy tests for voting
- × protected the rights of all citizens to vote
- × gave African Americans the right to vote
- × I don't know

Presidential elections are decided by
- × a majority of the vote
- × the popular vote
- × a plurality of the vote
- ✓ the electoral college
- × I don't know

The purpose of presidential primary elections is
- × to elect the president of the United States
- ✓ to have voters select delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions
- × to let political party leaders pick their favorite candidates for president
- × to let third party candidates into the presidential race
- × I don't know

Gerrymandering is
- × distributing seats in the House of Representatives among the states
- × dividing a state into sections based on population determined by the U.S. census
- × apportioning the number of electors in the Electoral College in a way that advantages particular states
- ✓ redistricting in a manner that gives an advantage to a particular political group
- × I don't know

APPENDIX B

Project Citizen Question Wording

Civic Knowledge

- The rights to life, liberty, and property are considered *natural rights.*
- The idea that power comes from the people who elect representatives who are responsible to the people is known as *popular sovereignty.*
- The idea that individual rights and freedoms are highly valued and protected is central to *liberalism.*
- Which term describes how power is divided between the three branches of government? *separation of powers*
- The supremacy clause in the U.S. Constitution states *that federal law takes precedence over state law when the laws conflict.*
- What are the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution called? *The Bill of Rights*
- Powers shared by the federal and state governments are *concurrent powers.*
- In the United States, federalism is *a constitutional arrangement where power is distributed between national and state governments.*
- Public policy is *an agreed-upon way that our government fulfills its responsibilities.*
- Which of the following is a community solution to the problem of food scarcity? *A religious organization operating a food pantry*
- Pluralism in government means *that there is competition among groups, with each group advocating for its own policies.*
- A non-profit organization working on public policy issues is part of *civil society.*
- A political interest group is *an advocacy group which seeks to promote a particular idea or public policy.*
- Grassroots lobbying is best defined as *getting citizens to contact their elected representatives.*
- Which of the following is NOT an outcome of the policy making process? *anarchy*
- Distributive policy is *a set of tools available to the government to enact policy.*
- Which of the following is a public policy that addresses animal rights? *A state law prohibiting puppy mills*
- Democratic decision making requires *citizens to participate in government affairs.*
- Reaching a consensus means that *a compromise is reached that reasonably satisfies everyone*.
- In American democracy, majority rule is *limited to protect minority rights.*

Civic Dispositions
- I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.
- I am well prepared to participate in political and public life.
- People like me don't have a say about what government does.
- All groups in my community should be allowed to try to influence government.
- I am familiar with the problems my community faces.

- Sometimes there is more than one reasonable position on what should be done about a problem in my community.
- I can find the government official or branch of government that is responsible for solving a problem in my community.
- Ordinary people have a say in what the government does.
- Citizens have an obligation to participate in public life.
- If government officials are not interested in hearing what people like me think, there is really no way to make them listen.

Civic Skills
- Identify a problem
- Research the problem
- Work cooperatively with others to solve the problem
- Develop a plan of action for addressing the problem
- Evaluate alternative solutions to the problem
- Attend a meeting about the problem
- Express your views in front of a group of people
- Write a letter to a local news outlet
- Organize a petition
- Contact a government official
- Use social media to publicize the problem
- Use social media to organize people to take action to solve the problem